

September 18, 1956
**Conversation records between Chairman Mao Zedong and
the Soviet Communist Party Delegation, 18 September
1956**

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Summary:

Mao Zedong and the Soviet Community Party Delegation exchanged views on Korean issues and a potential visit by Kim Il Sung to the PRC.

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Chinese

Contents:

- English Translation

Record of Chairman Mao's conversation with a Soviet Communist Party Committee Delegation

(Not yet proof read)

Time: September 18, 1956, 18:00 – 21:10

Location: Zhongnanhai, Yi Nian Hall

Participants: Soviet side: [Anastas] Mikoyan, [Nuritdin] Mukhitdinov, Boris Ponomarev, [Ivan] Kapitonov, [Pavel] Yudin, Sachkov [Saqiukefu]

Chinese side: Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai, Deng Xiaoping, Wang Jiaxiang, Shi Zhe

(At the beginning of the conversation, Chairman Mao asked Mikoyan and others if they feel tired having a meeting right after their arrival. Mikoyan said he was fine. Thereupon he introduced each member of the CC CPSU delegation to the Chinese comrades.)

Chairman Mao (hereafter, Chairman): As you see, what should be done about the Korea problem?

Mikoyan: All right! Let us start the discussion with this bad problem!

Chairman: Have you studied this problem? Have you seen it?

Mikoyan: We have not studied it properly yet. When Kim Il Sung visited every fraternal country in Europe, he did stop by Moscow. When he came, Khrushchev and other comrades from Central Committee met with Kim Il Sung. We raised the Korea problem and mentioned our views to Kim Il Sung. His return trip through Moscow coincided with my vacation, so I did not meet him then. However, as far as I know, comrades from the CC CPSU spoke to him again. There were some questions that weren't clear, and at that time we entrusted [the question] to the CC CPSU Department for Liaison [with Communist and Workers' Parties] for it to slowly work it out afterwards.

Ponomarev: At the time Kim Il Sung expressed agreement with our views and acceptance of our criticism. Kim Il Sung said that he would henceforth consider our opinions in his work and pay attention to rectifying his mistakes. During the meeting everyone spoke very candidly. We reported the results of the conversation to the CC CPSU. Later the CC CPSU sent a special notice to the CC CCP concerning this question. The CC CCP already sent a response.

Chairman: Indeed, I do remember there was a notice. I think you spoke well, you did the right thing.

Mikoyan: Although Kim Il Sung expressed agreement with our opinion, after returning home he continued to conduct affairs as he deemed fit. We received very little official material concerning their recent plenum. Kim Il Sung only told the Soviet ambassador in [North] Korea that there was debate during the meeting, that the discussion was good, and that now the situation is clear, there are no longer any problems. However according to the unofficial information that we received, the situation inside the Korean party is still very bad. We also heard some of some of the circumstances of which you know.

Chairman: By now already four people have fled to China. Two of them are members of the Central Committee, one is a candidate member of the Central Committee, and one is a member of the Pyongyang Party Committee. During the August 30, [1956] CC Plenum they raised views of Kim Il Sung, so they were expelled from the party. They knew they were about to be arrested, and so they fled. While in Pyongyang, they did not have enough time to inform our ambassador.

Mikoyan: We did not know that they would be arrested but we believe that this is entirely possible. The [North] Korean ambassador in the Soviet Union comrade Ri Sang-jo is a good comrade. Not long ago he asked to speak to CC CPSU comrades regarding the internal situation in the Korean party. We later asked comrade Ponomarev to talk with him. Ri Sang-jo said that Kim Il Sung cabled to recall him. He [Ri Sang-jo] said that he knew that if he returned then he would certainly be arrested. He does not want to return to [North] Korea. The head of [North] Korean Post and Telecommunications [Ministry] is currently in the Soviet Union for medical treatment. Recently he heard that Kim Il Sung wanted him to return. He also does not dare to return and said that if he does return then he will surely be arrested. Whether or not these things will actually happen, we do not know. But we know that these two comrades are good people. They said that they do not care whether or not they will be arrested, they only want that the question is handled correctly, that it is beneficial for the [North] Korean Party. Yesterday we invited some comrades from the [North] Korean supply delegation for a conversation. I said: we asked you to talk with us because we want to understand some circumstances. I openly told them that the four comrades who have fled to China have letters for the CC CCP and the CC CPSU, describing the current internal situation in the Korean party. Judging by the conversation, the [North] Korean delegates are parroting a few lines which had been taught to them by others. They said that those are all bastards. I asked them: what about history of these people's struggle - when were they elected to the Central Committee? They said that these people have more than ten years of membership in the party, and that they were elected to the Central Committee a few years ago. But they also said that these people are anti-party and anti-government. I asked them: where is the evidence? They said that these people engaged in an anti-party letter during the Party Central Committee Plenum. I said that criticism of the party's work and the party's leaders during a party meeting cannot be considered anti-party rhetoric. If a Central Committee member cannot criticize the party's work during a party plenum, then where can he speak! The party meeting is the only place where speaking out is allowed. As for the question of the internal situation in the Korean party, I spoke about it at the CC CPSU prior to coming to Beijing. However because there isn't much material, no one has definite opinions. However, everyone thinks something is not right. We believe that the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union should have influence on the Korean party and on Kim Il Sung. While he was in Moscow, we already spoke to him in a sincere way. It is still not very clear to us whether Kim Il Sung himself is bad or the people around him are bad. In the past Kim Il Sung gave us the impression of a capable party member with certain organizational abilities. However, when looking at a person one cannot only depend on what he says, one must also look at his practical actions. Therefore Kim Il Sung is difficult to understand. There is a serious crisis within the Korean party. If it goes on like this, the party will collapse.

Chairman: Indeed, this is dangerous!

Mikoyan: We feel uneasy about this affair, and we suffer from the lack of sufficient material. Therefore, at the moment it is still difficult for us to make up our minds. Therefore, during the conversation at the Central Committee we decided to come to Beijing and exchange views with the Chinese party comrades about this issue, and then again talk with Kim Il Sung. Our original calculation was that Kim Il Sung would come to attend the 8th Congress [of the Chinese Communist Party]. We would very much like to know what views the Chinese comrades have about this issue.

Chairman: Kim Il Sung is not coming! He said he is sick.

Mikoyan: I heard that he is currently in Pyongyang, but our embassy also has information which says he is resting in a villa on the bank of the Yalu River. We have an idea: we will pick a few comrades from our delegation and the Chinese party can also send a few comrades. Together we will travel to Pyongyang. We will jointly suggest that the Korean party should hold a Politburo meeting and invite Kim Il Sung to attend. All three sides will then have a talk together and clear up the situation. In my view, talking with the Korean delegates who are currently in Beijing is useless. We should still go to Pyongyang and listen to the opinion of both sides. Listening to just the opinions of the fugitives is not good. Kim Il Sung will then say we do not listen to his opinion. If we do not go to Pyongyang and instead invite him to come to Beijing, he will say that he is sick and

can't come. As a result, there will be no talks. Even if he himself comes while others do not come, this would still not be good for the talks. During talks with the Korean delegation yesterday, they said they will report to their CC on our conversation with them. They also said that they are willing to write up some material for the CC CPSU and the CC CCP so that we have some reference material when considering the Korean issue. I told Choe Yong-geon that evidently there is now some dispute in your party. I asked him: what attitude do you have towards people who oppose you? Choe Yong-geon said that they will use the method of re-education.

Chairman: How can this even be done? People have already been expelled from the Party!

Mikoyan: They said that there are still some people who have not been expelled yet.

Chairman: I heard that they recently dismissed two vice-premiers merely because they voiced some different views. Among the four people who escaped to China two are Central Committee members, and one is a candidate member of the Central Committee. They were expelled simply because they made some criticism during a CC meeting.

Mikoyan: I heard that during the CC Plenum, they did not even allow these people to finish speaking. This kind of situation is not to be allowed [even] during branch [party] meetings.

Chairman: Indeed! This is not normal for party life. As far as we know, during recent years many people were arrested in [North] Korea. For example, the high level cadre comrade Pak Il-u of the people's army was arrested for no reason.

Peng Dehuai (hereafter, Peng): Comrade Pak Il-u joined the communist youth league in China in 1928. In 1929 he transferred to the party, and then in 1931 in Manchuria he joined the Anti-Japanese United Army; he is a very good comrade.

Mikoyan: What shall we do about these issues?

Chairman: During the war, there were also many responsible [military] officers who were fired.

Mikoyan: As far as we know, a chief of the political department and a chief of the logistics department were also fired.

Peng: The head of the Sixth Army Bang Ho-san originally returned from China. There were four divisions in all that returned to [North] Korea, he headed one of the divisions. When he withdrew to the North, he brought back six thousand men. Afterwards, he was the head of the military academy. Once, when discussing the Korean War issue, he said that the timing was not right for war. As a result, he was later dismissed.

Mikoyan: This is not an issue of timing, it is an issue of whether or not it should have been undertaken in the first place. The initial decision was wrong. If you want to do it, do it right, attain victory. What should we do in the end, after all this discussion?

Chairman: I am afraid what you are saying is still the best. We still have to convince them to unite, convince them to retract [previous] orders, restore these people's party membership, restore these people to their positions. As for the people who are afraid to return home, they should be allowed to return without arrest. Otherwise, it would be inconvenient for our two countries. Both of our countries are harboring criminals, you have harbored two and we have harbored four. (Laughter).

Mikoyan: The Korean party has not yet asked us for those people, but they have already asked you for them. You not sending them back is correct. If they were sent back, I am afraid they

will be arrested.

Chairman: If they were sent back, they would be killed. I think Pak Heon-yeong could have been saved from death. In November 1953 we had a conversation with Kim Il Sung in this very room. He said there is evidence of Pak Heon-yeong's treason, but it is not sufficient. He asked me what to do. I once told Kim Il Sung that this kind of people should not be killed no matter what. By not killing them you can retain the initiative. If in the future it is proven that he is not a counter-revolutionary, you can say: I did not kill him. You can even restore his name and honor. If in the future it is proven that he is indeed a counter-revolutionary then you may still lock him up and still not kill him. Doing it this way will not have any negative aspects. At the time I said that this affair should be [carefully] considered; Pak Heon-yeong is the southern party's leader, if you kill him now then the masses will not know what crime he committed in the end. Pak Heon-yeong is not like [Lavrentii] Beria; Beria killed many people, whereas Pak Heon-yeong is a scholar.

Mikoyan: Indeed, Pak Heon-yeong is an intellectual and he has never threatened anyone. Pak Heon-yeong was one of the founders of the Korean party; he was a figure during the Comintern years. We met him many times in Moscow. At the time our impression of him was that he was a well-educated person; we had a good impression of him. Prior to the execution of Pak Heon-yeong, our KGB advisor in Korea reported on this affair to the KGB. The KGB also reported on this affair to the CC. The CC instructed the KGB to suggest to the Korean party through advisers not to kill Pak Heon-yeong. However in the end, they still killed him. Our mistake at the time was that we did not let the Korean party CC know that this opinion the official view of [the Soviet] CC. We only mentioned the suggestion through advisers. As you know, the suggestions of advisers can be listened to or rejected.

Zhou Enlai (hereafter, Zhou): Unlikely. The last time we spoke with Kim Il Sung here, we expressed the official view of the CC CCP. But they also did not heed us.

Mikoyan: After our KGB advisor reported that [North] Korea wants to kill Pak Heon-yeong, for a few months we did not hear any news regarding the execution. We thought that the issue has been delayed, and maybe [Pak Heon-yeong] would not be killed; therefore we did not consider using the name of our party CC to actively advise them [not to kill him]. Instead we only channeled our opinion in the form of a suggestion through our advisor. In the end, they still killed him.

Chairman: It seems now they are greatly dissatisfied with people from the central committees of our two parties. There is a lot of suspicion.

Mikoyan: What do you mean by "they"?

Chairman: The Korean party CC. The people who criticized Kim Il Sung only dared to criticize him at a meeting of the Central Committee because they heard Kim Il Sung was criticized in Moscow. But who would have thought that they would be expelled from the party during a CC meeting.

Mikoyan: Your view is correct. The Party secretary of our Embassy in [North] Korea (his external title is Counselor) said that recently some Korean comrades came over to talk with him and reflected on the internal situation of the Korean party. Our counselor listened attentively to their account but did not say much. Afterwards, Kim Il Sung found out about this matter. Kim Il Sung therefore became suspicious that the Soviet Embassy representing, the CC CPSU, is persuading people who oppose him to attack him.

Chairman: The 20th Soviet Party Congress was very unfavorable to Kim Il Sung. The 20th Party Congress revealed Stalin's mistakes, and Kim Il Sung is still doing the Stalin thing. He brooks no word of opposition. He kills whoever opposes him.

Mikoyan: Indeed, Kim Il Sung is doing the Stalin thing.

Chairman: The Central Committee plenum that he held this time after returning to [North Korea] was merely a formality. It was merely an attempt to show that all is well with their work.

Mikoyan: According to the CC CPSU delegation that participated in the 3rd Korean Worker's Party Congress, the delegates at the 3rd Party Congress were all appointed by the Worker's Party CC. They were not actually elected. The Congress said that the cult of personality is a Soviet phenomenon. It has nothing to do with [North] Korea. If one were to say that there was a cult of personality in [North] Korea, then it was only present with Pak Heon-yeong; and now Pak Heon-yeong is no longer among the living.

Chairman: Indeed, I have read the notice from the CC CPSU regarding the situation in the Korean party. You already criticized them and said that their 3rd Party Congress was done poorly.

Mikoyan: The Soviet comrades believe that their 3rd Party Congress was not an official Party Congress. The meeting was only for the show. The meeting was done poorly.

Chairman: As I see it, the recent party plenum was also only for show. [They] wanted to get by after making just minor self-criticism. They did not think that so many people would want the CC to make a good self-criticism.

Mikoyan: Actually the shortcomings were not mentioned at all. Sometimes bureaucrats conveniently disguise themselves by conducting some "self-criticism"; this is all to gloss over [their shortcomings]. It seems Kim Il Sung did not receive a very good education within the party.

Chairman: I approve of the solution you have just mentioned. What should we do and where? Suggest that they hold a politburo meeting, that's good.

Mikoyan: We will go [to North Korea] together with the Chinese comrades.

Chairman: In this regard, comrade Peng Dehuai can go, he is familiar with the affairs there. How about this: you send three people, we will send one.

Mikoyan: It is not good if you send one and we send three. You should also send three!

(Chairman Mao, Liu Shaoqi, and Zhou Enlai discussed for a while and decided that the CCP side would be sending a four-person delegation consisting of Peng Dehuai, Nie Rongzhen, Li Kenong, and Qiao Wanguang. They then suggested that the Soviet ambassador to [North] Korea should also join the CC CPSU delegation. Mikoyan accepted Chairman Mao's suggestion, that is to have the Soviet ambassador to [North] Korea also join the CC CPSU delegation.)

Mikoyan: I suggest that tonight we greet Pyongyang over the phone, and then we can fly early tomorrow. If there is no confidential [telephone] line, then we can also not disclose the specific names of the individuals [traveling to North Korea]. We can just say that there will be two delegations; and that we suggest holding a meeting to discuss related issues.

Chairman: What if Kim Il Sung is not in Pyongyang? He will say: I am sick, please do not come. Then what do we do?

Mikoyan: If he is sick, that is okay, we will go directly to his villa to find him. Usually when they rest outside [the city], there are three or four Politburo members there together.

Chairman: Currently Kim Il Sung has hostile sentiments towards us. Originally he had planned to come to Beijing for the 8th [Chinese Communist] Party Congress, but all of a sudden he notified us that he is sick; and therefore cannot come.

Mikoyan: He is dissatisfied that you did not return those who had escaped.

Chairman: Kim Il Sung knew that you were coming, and if he came then [we] would certainly discuss the Korea issue with him.

Mikoyan: Yes, therefore, he decided not to come.

Chairman: When you go [to North Korea] this time, Kim Il Sung will say: In the past you interfered with Yugoslavia and now you want to interfere with me. In the past, when Yugoslavia was interfered with, there was only the Soviet Union, and now China has been added as well. (Laughter).

Mikoyan: Last time, it was our mistake.

Chairman: I say, we need to tell Kim Il Sung that we are not trying to overthrow him, we have come to help you but you have to correct your style.

Mikoyan: Indeed, no one among us is preparing to overthrow him.

Chairman: We need to tell Kim Il Sung: your method of knocking [people] down cannot go on, it will only sharpen the contradictions within the party. Today you may have knocked them down, but maybe tomorrow they will still overthrow you. If this goes on, your party and your task will be in danger!

Mikoyan: My opinion is that after we arrive we should talk with Kim Il Sung alone and tell him our views clearly, tell him that we are indeed there to help him. [We should tell him:] your method is incorrect and it must change. It is not good if you do not change it.

Chairman: Indeed, we should persuade them to reach reconciliation. Kim Il Sung should admit that mistakes have been made in the past. At the same time, we should also persuade those who had been fixed to adopt a conciliatory attitude. The issues must be clarified and we should persuade them to adopt a cooperative attitude towards Kim Il Sung.

Mikoyan: Indeed, this is a good direction. We should persuade both sides to adopt a conciliatory attitude.

Chairman: We must also prepare for another point, that is, Kim Il Sung may say that we are interfering with his affairs; he may want us to withdraw our troops.

Mikoyan: Do you reckon he will really raise the issue in this way?

Chairman: It is difficult to say. We are willing to withdraw our troops. The current situation is that the Americans are in the South and Syngman Rhee has a large force. It was Kim Il Sung who requested that we keep the [People's] Volunteer Army [in North Korea].

Mikoyan: It probably won't come to him raising this issue! It is true that he does not like us asking him about their party affairs. But exchanging views and mutual criticism between fraternal parties is entirely allowed. The interests of the Korean party, the interests of the Korean people and the interests of the entire Socialist camp are intimately connected. After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, there were also abnormal phenomena inside the Hungarian party. I was on vacation at the time, and went to Hungary. Now it seems that I also interfered in their internal affairs. I interfered but the problem was resolved. A lot of people were arrested in Rakosi's times. After the 20th Congress, the CC decided to release a lot of people. In the streets people often cried out against Rakosi. In reality they opposed the Party Central Committee.

Chairman: Rakosi was a good man. His level of Marxism-Leninism was very high. Comrade Rakosi could be removed but it is difficult to deal with Kim Il Sung.

Mikoyan: Comrade Rakosi was also unwilling to be removed at first. There was a five thousand-strong assembly in the street; the masses used loudspeakers to shout out against the Hungarian Central Committee. Even the Party press published articles against the CC. The editor of the party newspaper is a Central Committee member but he was a CC member who did not obey the CC. The Party Central Committee already lost prestige inside the party, it already could not form the leading group. The party discipline was extremely lax. I intentionally told Rakosi: as these people are against the party, against the Central Committee, and against the government, one can arrest them. Rakosi said: I have not arrested anyone. You arrest a few people today and tomorrow there is going to be even more people shouting against the party and against the government. Rakosi already lost prestige among the masses. The masses say: Rakosi just wants to allow a little democracy today, to relax the situation a bit, and when the situation stabilizes in the future, he will again arrest people. The masses already did not believe him. In 1948 when the Labour Party merged with the Social Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party had more than 200,000 party members. The Labour Party absorbed into its Central Committee more than thirty leaders from the Social Democracy Party. After the merger, within a few years, all of these thirty plus were arrested, this was simply a political scam. Already at that time comrade Rakosi became the sole target of the anti-party [activities] of the party opposition. I pointed out at a meeting of the Politburo of the Hungarian Party that if comrade Rakosi considers the party interests, he himself should resign. After I made this proposal, not one participant of the Politburo meeting spoke up to express a [contrary?] attitude. Then, comrade Rakosi understood at last. He said: if my departure is in the party's interests, I can leave. I told comrade Rakosi: to be honest, to preserve prestige, it would be better to step down now. This way, when you die, you can take some remaining prestige with you into the grave. Otherwise, after half a year, it'll all run out. In the end comrade Rakosi decided to resign, and everyone agreed. Two former Social Democratic Party members were restored to the Politburo, one full, one candidate.^[1] The new Central Committee has a larger quota. Each provincial secretariat promoted some new young and promising [people]. After the election of the new Central Committee, they demanded that the party paper obeys the Party Central Committee leadership, it cannot go on opposing the party. The editorial board had two bad elements; afterwards, they were expelled, and the party newspaper came to defend the party position. After things were handled in this way, the entire party was satisfied. You say: interference. Is this not interference? After [we] interfered, comrades said: thank you, you saved our party. The Hungarian situation was very complicated. The Americans were shouting every day, saying the Hungarian Party should step down. How can we allow a ruling Communist Party in a socialist country to step down? It's impossible. It's absolutely impossible.

Chairman: Good. Let's drink a cup of wine! (Meal begins).

Mikoyan: Hungary used to have a Prime Minister called [Imre] Nagy. He made rightist mistakes in work. It was correct to dismiss him. But it was not appropriate to expel him from the party. After Nagy was dismissed, he was expelled from the Central Committee. After half a year he was also expelled from the party. After another half year [they] just would not give him work, [they] wanted him to pass his days drawing a pension. He did not do it; he demanded work for himself.

Chairman: All of these methods are the methods of digging one's own grave.

Mikoyan: I saw Nagy in Hungary and asked him whether he wanted to return to the party. He said that of course he was willing to return to the party, that he can't live without the party. He believes that it was correct to dismiss him but it was wrong to expel him from the party. I told him: if you want to be readmitted to the party, you should admit to the party the past mistakes that you had made; if you want to make your way back to the party through struggle, it won't do. It is also not in your interest. To be honest, if you do it like this, you will isolate yourself from the party. I spoke sharply, so as to make him understand: he should not haggle with the party. He has mistakes, and he should admit them to the party. He saw that Poland's Gomulka was restored to party membership but did not announce that he was admitting his mistakes. He [Nagy] also hoped he'd be restored his party membership without admitting mistakes. Gomulka also was expelled from the party for making rightist mistakes. When he was being restored to the party, comrade

Ochab went to talk to him. He agreed to restore his [Gomulka's] party membership but did not ask that he admits his mistakes. Rakosi really listened to Stalin. Whatever Stalin wanted he did. He never opposed Stalin. Their thinking was completely the same.

Chairman: What do you think of Kim Il Sung?

Mikoyan: Kim Il Sung is almost [like this]. He doesn't really get it. After the 20th CPSU Congress, there was chaos and crisis in many of the fraternal parties. There was also a great upsurge in the Polish party. Comrade Bierut died suddenly. However, people still had opinions about him. (Turns to a different topic).

Chairman: (Pointing to the First Secretary of Uzbekistan's Party CC Mukhitdinov) This comrade is very young.

Mikoyan: He is only 38 years old. He is my successor.

Chairman (to Mukhitdinov): You could live to the 21st century.^[2]

Mukhitdinov: In a Communist society, all people should live to 150 years. You will all live long lives.

Mikoyan: He was just elected at the 20th Congress; he is very tender, like the fresh cucumbers we are having. Their cotton harvest [in Uzbekistan] is very good this year. They are now taking measures to turn 500,000 ha of wasteland into arable land in four years. In the future, [they will] be able to collect 1,100,000 tons of seed cotton or 300,000 tons of lint. This piece of land is not his. It's Kazakhstan Republic's. As the land is vast and people are sparse there, we have decided to give it to him. It is very close to where they are.

Chairman: This is a just aggression. It can even be approved by the United Nations. (Laugh).

Mikoyan: This is by an agreement of the two sides. It's not a UN business.

Yudin: The UN doesn't know. If it knew, it could interfere.

Mikoyan: They obtained 500,000 ha of land without going to war.

Mukhitdinov: When we begin cultivating this land, we plan to invest 4.6 billion rubles. Our republic's population is only 7.3 million people. This year we can deliver to the state 3 million tons of cotton. The cotton harvest is very good this year.

Mikoyan: The Soviet Union's grain harvest is also quite good this year. Last year the cotton production plan could not be fully completed [but] this year it will be completed. This year, sugar beet and hemp [harvest] can exceed the plan.

Chairman: How far are you from Xinjiang?

Mukhitdinov: We do not have a direct border with Xinjiang but we are close to China.

Chairman: Oh! We are neighbors.

Mukhitdinov: Development of these wastelands requires 100 thousand migrants.

Mikoyan: He is very ambitious. He also wants to have tea plantations there; when the railroad is built in the future, he can sell the tea to China.

(The conversation returns to the original topic).

Chairman: Good! Let's talk about Kim Il Sung again. Recently they published an article saying that after the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Imperialism has been doing everything in its power to undermine Communist and Workers' parties in every country. It said that there are some people inside the Korean Workers' Party who want to undermine unity. These people are carrying out the wishes of Imperialism, that they and Imperialism echo one another. They've connected the people who oppose them with Imperialism.

Mikoyan: They want to demonstrate logically that they are not at fault, and that only the people opposing them are wrong.

Chairman: Maybe Kim Il Sung really thinks that. As I see it, think thinking does not end with Kim Il Sung. The CC Plenum convened for two days. During the first day's meeting, [when] those who were expressing criticism had not yet finished speaking, more than ten people got up demanding that these speeches be stopped, and the majority in the hall did not express their views. Nam Il, by contrast, called on them to finish speaking. It looks like Nam Il perhaps shares the CC's opinion.

Mikoyan: Nam Il participated in the conversation at the CC CPSU in Moscow. At the time Pak Jung-ae was also present. There is information that the people who criticized Kim Il Sung demanded to have Choe Yong-gon and Pak Jung-ae dismissed from their jobs. These two are in complete agreement with Kim Il Sung. Kim Tu-bong discovered that things weren't right but he did not dare to express his attitude. In fact, Kim Tu-bong is a good comrade.

Chairman: In the last few years, Kim Tu-bong wanted to visit China but Kim Il Sung would not let him come.

Mikoyan: Comrade Kim Tu-bong is a good man. He is very reliable politically.

Chairman: He is a scholar.

Mikoyan: His orientation is also appropriate.

Chairman: When you go this time, let's estimate, how much support can you get? Probably the majority of the [Plenum] meeting will support you. Probably, those who did not dare to speak out will support you.

Mikoyan: To convince them to reconcile is correct. It is in the interest of all of us.

Chairman: One should not do the "you die I live" thing. What's the advantage [of that]? Today I rise up to overthrow you. Tomorrow you rise up to overthrow me. It's no good. Even the capitalist class has a two-party system! The U.S. has two parties. Eisenhower came into power and Truman was not locked up! This point is a little better with the capitalist class than with feudalism. China has many parties. There is the CCP, and there are also many democratic parties. We are all in power. We are a multi-party system. I told the democratic parties' friends: if there was no Communist Party, the democratic parties could not exist. Who would vote for them?

Mikoyan: The Democratic Party are your agents. (Laughing).

Chairman: So I told them, we have to have long-term cooperation.

Mikoyan: After a class is eliminated, that class's ideology will still remain for a long time. It's like a snake: you chop the head off, and its body can wriggle as if alive for a long time.

Chairman: We say that the Communist party is around today, it will be around tomorrow, and it will die off the day after tomorrow, and the democratic parties are also like that: around today, around tomorrow, and they will die off the day after tomorrow; it is not like it is around today

and they will die off tomorrow.

Mikoyan: So you are called “Two ‘Long Lives!’”

Chairman: We tell people from the democratic parties: as long as exist, you will exist. They were very happy to hear it. To be honest, the democratic parties help us a lot.

Mikoyan: What you are doing is completely correct.

Chairman: All of their criticism comes from the right side, making some of our comrades who easily fall into leftism watch out.

Mikoyan: Long Live or not, when the classes have been eliminated, their [the democratic parties’] foundation will anyway disappear.

Chairman: We are not afraid of their criticism. If it is correct, we listen. If it is incorrect, we don’t have to do it.

Mikoyan: I heard at the Congress how the democratic parties’ [representatives] all said that they are advancing “under the correct leadership of Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party.” This serves to show that you have educated them well.

Chairman: What attitude should we take to people inside the party who committed mistakes, people inside the party who dissent? One can have two methods. One is Kim Il Sung’s method. These people there [in North Korea] who committed so called mistakes in fact did not commit any mistakes. I am talking about people who really committed mistakes. They commit mistakes, you still want to give them a job, you still want to let them eat, you can’t knock them down in one blow, you have to give them an opportunity to correct their mistakes. We in China had two famous lines. One was the Wang Ming line. One was the Li Lisan line. At this Congress they were still elected to the Central Committee.

Mikoyan: Were they elected at the 7th Congress?

Chairman: Yes. They were elected to the Central Committee at the 7th Congress. We only persuaded the representatives to elect them after a great effort. This time, too, it took an effort to persuade the representatives. Everyone was very dissatisfied with them. We said: to elect is better than not to elect. This is not an individual problem. They represent the people from the petit bourgeois class inside the party. When they were emperors in the party, their policy was that if you listen to them, you ascended Heaven, whereas if you criticized them, you were overthrown. We can’t use these methods of theirs against them. If this is the right thing to do, electing them does no harm, all it takes is adding two names to the Central Committee.

Mikoyan: Yes. It does no harm.

Chairman: This hasn’t the slightest influence on the [policy] line. Perhaps some people think: people who made mistakes can be Central Committee members - well, then, let me also make mistakes! I don’t think that there are people like this.

Mikoyan: What you have said about taking this kind of realistic, correct attitude towards people who have committed mistakes is something I heard you say in February 1949, when I visited China. At the time it made a deep impression on me. After I returned to the Soviet Union, I recounted this to Stalin without missing a word. At the time I wanted Stalin to understand your meaning. However, after I finished speaking, Stalin did not utter a word. His methods were the opposite of yours. Although he did not say it, he understood [what I was referring to]. I know he did not agree with that. At the time of the 4th [sic, should be 10th] CPSU Party Congress, there was an opposition faction inside the party – [Aleksandr] Shlyapnikov and others. Lenin was still alive at the

time. The Bolshevik representatives did not put forward the initiative of electing him to the Central Committee. Lenin was opposed to this view. He said: one should let them come in. They represent certain things.

Chairman: One needs some rightists and leftists, there is no need for uniformity.

Mikoyan: The party can make a united decision and force the opposition to implement it. At the time the opposition was mainly the anarchist workers' [opposition]. One could criticize their mistaken leaning but one should still elect their representatives to the Central Committee. When Lenin expressed these views, Stalin was also present. At the time he agreed, but after the passage of some ten years, he forgot everything.

Chairman: Yes. This experience of yours is good. The opposition factions could be preserved.

Mikoyan: The Soviet opposition factions were no longer opposed to the party for a fairly long time but later they were still eliminated. For instance, [Nikolai] Bukharin. The party's struggle with him happened in 1928. Afterwards, for 6 or 8 years he was not at all opposed to the party. But in 1936 he was still killed. At the time he did not pose any obstacles for the party. I don't understand why Stalin did that. Perhaps he worried that if these people remained there would be a latent danger. Otherwise, why couldn't he not kill them? This is just my guess.

Chairman: This is because [he] did not believe in the masses. So, he was afraid daily.

Mikoyan: Before the 19th Congress, Stalin already started to suspect comrade Molotov and me. He wanted to get rid of us, raised new people, [but] then he did not trust these new people. To be honest, I ardently loved Stalin for fifteen years. I loved him more than I loved anyone else. But later it was not the same. I clearly remember one episode. In 1950 I and comrade Khrushchev together went to [Stalin's] dacha in Sochi to see Stalin. One morning everyone was having tea at Stalin's place. Suddenly Stalin told the two of us very seriously and sternly that he believed that his life was in serious danger, and in his innermost heart he was extremely depressed. I and comrade Khrushchev were shocked to hear that. Stalin said he did not trust anyone. Sometimes he did not trust even himself. I and comrade Khrushchev can never forget those words of his. A leader openly admitting that his innermost heart is empty is very said. Before Stalin died, we expressed not a few opinions to him but no one adhered to factional, organizational, or group sentiments. It was not that we had no divergence at the time on international questions and on the agricultural question – we had divergence. Stalin believed in general that since there are different opinions, there has to be a plot somewhere. Stalin believed in general that there are people who oppose him. After Stalin died, we did not immediately begin opposing him because at the time a good impression [of Stalin] was still very deeply embedded in our minds, there were many certainties. Only before the 20th Congress did we substantially consult the archival materials. Only when we looked at the archives that we discovered the problems. In the past we were suspicious about many cases, we had an idea but no evidence. But later a lot of problems were discovered. Originally we all thought that the mistakes in the purges could be blamed on the Ministry of State Security, which gave fake materials to Stalin, and that Stalin was hoodwinked and taken in. Now, only after looking at a lot of the archives that we discovered that this wasn't the case. In the archives we found a lot of letters to Stalin from people who were forced to confess their guilt, expressing their innocence. Among these letters we found a plea to Stalin written personally by Bukharin before his execution.

Chairman: Did your Politburo comrades not see any of these letters at the time?

Mikoyan: None of the Politburo comrades knew anything. There had not been a real Politburo meeting for many years, and the meetings that did take place were usually procedural. We saw the originals of these letters and were greatly pained. Bukharin's letter said that he was innocent, that he never betrayed the party, never opposed the people, and not only that he did not oppose Stalin but that he exceedingly loved and esteemed him. Bukharin requested that he not be

sentenced by placed in whatever position to be tested, like to run a school or to manage a farm, so that he vindicates himself through practical works. But later Stalin still approved Bukharin's execution. No one knew about these things. The verdicts were all written ahead of time. Court trials were just for the form because before the trials the defendants were already sentenced to death. In the archives [we] discovered a letter written by [Janis] Rudzutaks before his execution, which blamed the court for completely breaking socialist legality. At the time we only saw a small note about Rudzutaks being a spy, we did not see any documents from the defense. We only discovered all of that before the 20th Congress. Then there was comrade [Robert] Eikhe. He was Estonian. At the time he was a deputy member of the Politburo. Because he was tortured, he could not handle it, so he confessed, saying that he was an Estonian nationalism, that he never entered the party. This forced false confession was circulated at the time but before his death he left a letter, recounting the injustice of the circumstances of his confession. This letter was discovered only later.

Chairman: Extracting confession for punishment is a remnant of feudalism.

Mikoyan: This is a method of the Persian kings from the Middle Ages.

Chairman: We also have this sort of thing. Say a peasant joins the revolution, becomes a cadre, becomes a chief of a country public security bureau, obtaining great power overnight. He can use these sorts of methods. In 1929 we raised the question of abolishing corporal punishment in the Red Army. But it can't be abolished in one go.

Mikoyan: After the 19th CPSU Congress, the Central Committee convened a plenum. A lot of us raised the question of the decline in agricultural production. We said: life in the countryside is no good because the [state] purchase price for milk is inappropriate. A lot of milk cows had died, and there is a great shortage of dairy products. Because a lot of people reflected on these circumstances, the Central Committee decided to establish a special commission. Comrade Khrushchev, comrade Ponomarev and I participated in this commission. We spent a month's labor, conducted research and investigation and unanimously proposed to adjust the selling prices for agricultural products. We drew up an adjustment program. We knew at the time that Stalin would oppose it. So we raised with Stalin only a half of the projected range of adjustments, thinking to let Stalin first agree to the first step, and then in the future raise the second step. This first step program was given to Stalin two months before his death. Stalin said: your method if [Aleksei] Rykov's method. Stalin did not accept these proposals. On the contrary, he organized a commission with [Georgii] Malenkov and [Lavrentii] Beria participating, to consider the question of increasing taxes. But the members of this commission also believed that if one raised taxes, the peasants would rebel. They believed that disabled veterans, pensioners, military men and their families would all have to pay taxes, and these people originally did not pay taxes. Stalin asked: if you collect taxes in this way, how many tax-payers will you have? According to statistic, you would have 5 million households. Then Stalin decided to postpone tax increases. Stalin was afraid. He feared that if it was not done well, then really there would be a rebellion. Until Stalin's death the first program on the adjustment of purchase prices for agricultural products was not approved, so it was not necessary to put forward the second program. We all felt that in the few years before Stalin's death, it was very difficult for everyone to get along with him.

Chairman: When there is only one party in a country, it is even more important to hear the views of the opposition.

Mikoyan: We now insist on the principle of democratic centralism. We have meetings. Meetings discuss questions. After ample discussion, questions are put to a vote. Our Central Committee has different views on certain matters. We resolutely discuss these divergences. For example, on the question of the Yugoslav Communist Party, we had three large-scale discussions over a two-month period, and only then was a decision taken. Not having an ample discussion, and putting the question straight to a vote is not a [good] method for resolving problems. After a discussion, people who began to have doubts or those who opposed will, perhaps, ultimately agree

with the correct view.

Chairman: To understand something requires a process.

Mikoyan: Some people do not agree at first but after discussion and criticism they abandon their opinions. Similarly, we came here to have this meeting, but it's impossible for us to share the same view immediately after we are seated.

Chairman: If someone couldn't understand [the consensus], [we] may just leave him in that confusion.

Mikoyan: As long as there is a unanimous resolution.

Chairman: However, one cannot spread leaflets. Wang Ming did not acknowledge that his line was mistaken but he said that the current line of the Central Committee is correct. He did not say a word about his own mistakes.

Chairman [sic]: We also did not force him. You can't do it by force. It has to come from heart.

Mikoyan: Today his problem is no longer political but historical.

Chairman: He is still useful. He is useful in our education of party members. The whole party, the whole country, the whole world have heard of these two people, Wang Ming and Li Lisan.

Mikoyan: A strong party allows. A weak party fears, and does not dare to leave such people around. The important thing is to have a strong party leadership core, to have real Marxists-Leninists. It does no harm to leave such people in the party.

Chairman: The democratic parties are useful. They are mainly rightists in the United Front. They frequently curse us. [It is fine] as long as they don't publish it in the newspapers.

Mikoyan: The advantage is being able to hear criticism. If you did not have them, you could feel isolated. Is there a socialist party among the Chinese democratic party?

Zhou: It is not called socialist in name but in fact there is. They are for socialism, and their direction is also socialist. Only, they have no relations with foreign socialist parties.

Mikoyan: Now socialist parties have two groupings, the European and the Asian. This November all the socialist parties of Asia will meet in India. It would be best to get in there.

Chairman: This is very difficult because China's democratic parties openly acknowledged and, moreover, declared that they would carry out work under the leadership of the CCP. Secondly, they are socialist in name [but] these parties have historically never had any connection with foreign socialist parties.

Mikoyan: One can say, in form, that they agree with the Communist Party's initiatives. They should not say: we obey CCP leadership. This way, when one party obeys another party's leadership, is not too good. Relationship of obedience is useful domestically but has [negative] influence on international activities. Foreign socialist parties can say that it is just an appendix to the CCP. Chinese comrades can consider whether there is a way to get into the congress of Asian socialist parties that will take place this November in India. European socialist parties approve of colonialism but Asian socialist parties oppose colonialism.

Chairman: This question can be considered.

Mikoyan: In Europe only the Yugoslav Communist Party has relations with socialist parties, and participates in their meetings. I think one party is too few. See whether one can get in as an observer in Asia. Does comrade Ho Chi Minh have socialist parties over there [in Vietnam]?

Chairman: One can see whether Vietnam has them or not and whether they can go or not.

Mikoyan: When European socialist parties opened their meeting, the CPSU sent them a congratulatory telegram.

Chairman: Were they happy?

Mikoyan: They did not announce that the Soviet Union sent a congratulatory telegram. If they don't announce it, that is no loss either. We said only the good things, supporting the spirit of Bandung, opposing colonialism, mentioning peaceful co-existence and other nice things.

Chairman: Among Asia's socialist parties, Japan's and India's are relatively good. Indonesia's is the worst.

Mikoyan: I have been in contact with people from Burma's socialist parties. They have a leftist and a rightist faction. They originally agreed to send a delegation to the Soviet Union but later due to domestic elections, [when] Ba Swe became the Prime Minister, they did not go.

Chairman: Let's still talk about Kim Il Sung's business! What sort of meeting do you think would be good? One has two kinds: one kind is an extended Politburo meeting, with a little more people; the best would be a Central Committee plenum. This I am afraid Kim Il Sung won't do, because he just had one and it was bad. This time, when you come and force him to convene [a plenum], I am afraid Kim Il Sung won't do it. It won't do for his face. The Politburo overturning a Central Committee Plenum decision – this is not in accordance with the law. The power of your visit is tremendous. They are also splitting internally these days. I think there are many people among them who want the Soviet Union and China to send people to help them resolve problems. Kim Il Sung may also think there is no way out, perhaps he will agree to open a plenum.

Mikoyan: I think there is perhaps a possibility. If we raise this, it will be hard for him to refuse.

Chairman: It would be best to write a resolution; otherwise there will be no evidence after the fact. After you go, they'll make noise again. After the resolution has been passed, it also needs to be published.

Mikoyan: First, we will invite Kim Il Sung, Pak Jung-ae and Nam Il for a conversation, [try to] persuade them to open a meeting. I think politically they have no really to oppose.

Chairman: How many days do you reckon it will take. One, two days won't do.

Mikoyan: Two days won't do?

Chairman: As I see it, it will take four days.

Peng: I think it will take seven days.

Mikoyan: Recently comrade Khrushchev also wanted to go to Yugoslavia. Before he goes we need to come down, so I need to go back quickly.

Chairman: You have to talk to a lot of people while there.

Peng: The South Korean faction can raise the question of Pak Heon-yeong.

Mikoyan: One has to convince these people not to stir history. The man is no longer around, and there is a lot of unclear gossip.

Chairman: Let us not talk about the past anymore! I am afraid you would need to stay for four or five days. The Pak Heon-yeong case is very complicated.

Mikoyan: We will temporarily leave it unsettled and first see what the situation is like!

Chairman: This time we are counting on you. They do not listen to the Chinese.

Mikoyan: I also do not know if they will listen. They may well listen but what they will do is another matter.

Chairman: They don't listen to China at all, and they don't listen to you three quarters of the time.

Mikoyan: I really do not understand them.

Chairman: He is afraid that our two parties are digging at his wall.

Mikoyan: This time we will talk with him frankly.

Chairman: To be honest, if they do not change, even if no one digs at their wall, it will still collapse.

Mikoyan: It seems forcing those [escapees] to return to [North] Korea will be difficult.

Chairman: It is okay if they do not return!

Mikoyan: [They can] live abroad for one or two years, and then we will see.

Chairman: This way, they will say that we are protecting their counter-revolutionary elements.

Mikoyan: We are socialist countries, I think he won't say that.

Chairman: There is currently a tense situation between the Soviet Union, China and [North] Korea

Mikoyan: Actually, there already has been a conflict between China and [North] Korea. Their people escaped and you have harbored them. They came to ask for those people, but you have refused to turn them over; is that not conflict?

Chairman: They will say, now you are protecting those people, in the future you will oppose us.

Mikoyan: I can tell him that we are not prepared to use those people to oppose Kim Il Sung.

Chairman: If Kim Il Sung's heart were wider then it would be better. If he is like Stalin, then it will be very difficult.

Mikoyan: This is mainly an issue of face. The resolution passed during [their] central plenary meeting was not very good.

Chairman: We need to persuade Kim Il Sung to not view those who had escaped as traitors. They certainly would not want those people [the escapees] to crush Kim Il Sung's eggs.

Mikoyan: That is very correct.

Chairman: If we do not speak clearly, it will cause suspicion and enmity.

Mikoyan: Comrade Mao Zedong! We will implement this direction. We suggest that Choe Yong-geon return to [North Korea] with us.

Chairman: [I] suggest that the ambassadors to [North] Korea from both of our countries should join the party delegation. The delegation will consist of eight people.

Mikoyan: We will converse with Choe Yong-geon and ask him if he is willing to go with us.

Chairman: We intend to invite [the North Korean delegation] for a conversation.

Mikoyan: We intend to be on the move tomorrow morning.

Chairman: We will invite Choe Yong-geon for a conversation tonight. Since they first came, they have expressed willingness to discuss this issue with us. We can finish the conversation before 11PM, and then we will ask Choe Yong-geon to go to the residence of comrade Mikoyan.

Mikoyan: I will be waiting to meet Choe Yong-geon. Regarding the affair of our visit, I asked Choe Yong-geon to report to their Central Committee.

Chairman: Okay! Let us adjourn!

^[1] There is lack of clarity in this sentence, which also contains a reference to the "Party Press," but this seems to a typo or a fragment of a different sentence.

^[2] Mukhitdinov died in 2008.